

Green marketing and the purchasing decision oriented towards sustainable consumption

Marketing verde e decisões de compra voltadas para o consumo sustentável

El green marketing y la decisión de compra orientada al consumo sostenible

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marco.veloz@utc.edu.ec**ARTICLE HISTORY****Received:** 29-11-2023**Revised Version:** 18-01-2024**Accepted:** 27-01-2024**Published:** 31-01-2024**Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors**License:** CC BY-NC-ND 4.0**Manuscript type:** Article**ARTICLE INFORMATIONS****Science-Metrix Classification (Domain):**

Economic & Social Sciences

Main topic:

Consumer behavior & green marketing

Main practical implications:

Practical implications for policy involve promoting transparency in green marketing and ensuring accessibility of sustainable products.

For theory, insights enrich understanding of sustainable consumption motivations and decision-making processes.

Originality/value:

The study offers relevant insights into demographic influences on sustainable consumption, highlighting gender and age disparities, socioeconomic factors, and the importance of genuine corporate sustainability efforts in green marketing strategies.

ABSTRACT

Sustainable and environmentally friendly consumption is a current trend, so marketing strategies focused on this doctrine have taken its name green marketing or green marketing. The present research is oriented to analyze green marketing from the perspective of sustainable consumption, for this purpose a correlational study was used between the two variables of green marketing study mediated by four dimensions: sustainability, price, quality, and durability proposed in four scenarios of purchase decision, segmenting consumers by age, gender, economic and social status and level of education. The main results show that women tend to buy sustainable products regardless of their level of education and that young people are the age groups that show the greatest interest in environmental care. The correlation matrix reflects that the male gender is more inclined to price and quality of products rather than sustainability. Low, medium, and high economic and social status are inclined towards the purchase scenario where sustainability goes hand in hand with price, quality, and durability of products.

Keywords: Green marketing, purchasing decision, sustainable consumption.**RESUMO**

O consumo sustentável e amigo do ambiente é uma tendência atual, a tal ponto que as estratégias de marketing focadas nesta doutrina ganharam nome próprio marketing verde. A presente pesquisa tem como objetivo analisar o marketing verde sob a perspectiva do consumo sustentável, para tanto foi utilizado um estudo correlacional entre as duas variáveis de estudo do marketing verde médias sustentabilidade, preço, qualidade e durabilidade propostas em quatro dimensões. idade, gênero, estatuto econômico e social e nível educacional. Os principais resultados refletem que as mulheres tendem as suas compras para produtos sustentáveis independentemente do nível de escolaridade, os jovens são as faixas etárias que refletem o interesse pelos cuidados ambientais. A matriz de correlação reflete que o gênero masculino está mais inclinado para o preço e a qualidade dos produtos do que para a sustentabilidade. O estatuto econômico e social baixo, médio e alto inclina-se para um cenário de compras onde a sustentabilidade anda de mãos dadas com o preço, a qualidade e a durabilidade dos produtos.

Palavras-chave: Marketing verde, decisão de compra, consumo sustentável.**RESUMEN**

El consumo sostenible y amigable con el medio ambiente es tendencia actual, al punto que las estrategias de marketing enfocadas a esta doctrina hayan tomado nombre propio green marketing o marketing verde. La presente investigación se orienta a analizar el green marketing desde la perspectiva de consumo sostenible, para efecto se empleó un estudio correlacional entre las dos variables de estudio green marketing media por cuatro dimensiones la sustentabilidad, el precio, la calidad y la durabilidad propuestos en cuatro escenarios de decisión de compra segmentando los consumidores por edad, género, estatus económico y social y nivel de estudios. Los principales resultados reflejan que las mujeres inclinan sus compras hacia productos sustentables independientemente del nivel de estudio, los jóvenes son los grupos etarios que reflejan interés sobre cuidado ambiental. La matriz de correlación refleja que el género masculino se inclina más por el precio y la calidad de los productos antes que por la sustentabilidad. El estatus económico y social bajo, medio y alto se inclinan hacia el escenario de compra donde la sustentabilidad va de la mano con el precio, la calidad y la durabilidad de los productos.

Palabras clave: Marketing verde, decisión de compra, consumo sostenible.

INTRODUCTION

Latin Americans' concern about climate change is among the highest globally. The issues that most concern them are the depletion of natural resources, water pollution and deforestation. Globally, the most significant environmental concerns are global warming, air pollution and waste management. However, when asked about the main problem facing their country, less than 1% of Latin American and Caribbean citizens mention environmental problems or global warming. Instead, they focus their attention on unemployment and the economy, although these priorities vary by country. (ECLAC, 2022)

The nations of Latin America and the Caribbean are seeking to capitalize on the possibilities offered by globalization in order to achieve the economic growth that is essential for reducing poverty, while at the same time confronting the growing tensions on natural resources and their response capacities. For this reason, there is a progressive increase in legislation related to environmental impact assessment, environmental liability, territorial planning and citizen participation mechanisms. (Consultancy in Environmental Management & Sustainability, 2021)

Marketing is the process or set of activities that aims to communicate, inform and generate offers of value for consumers, it is a philosophy that is responsible for fulfilling the desires and needs of the target market more efficiently than its competition. Kotler states that marketing has gone through three versions: marketing 1.0, which focuses on reaching customers and obtaining profits efficiently. Marketing 2.0, where in addition to making a good product, it was necessary to start analyzing customers through large databases, to get as close as possible to their desires. And marketing 3.0, which has a social and ethical base where companies and consumers are concerned not only about a good product but also about the environment (González, 2020). In this sense, terms such as green marketing and sustainable consumption appear.

The consumption of sustainable, organic and environmentally friendly products has become relevant in recent years, in this sense, companies develop strategies to attract these customers, so terms such as green marketing appear, which translated into Spanish is called green marketing oriented to promote sustainable products in all economic, social and of course in the environmental aspect.

Several authors agree that women are more inclined to sustainable consumption of products that are good for their health, that preserve their physical appearance and that are environmentally friendly, and that men, when in the company of a woman, choose this type of products, but when the purchase decision depends only on him, he acts differently since he is less susceptible to be carried away by his ecological conscience. (Alvarado, 2020).

This research is oriented to analyze green marketing from the perspective of the purchase decision oriented to sustainable consumption. For this purpose, 200 individuals of different age groups, male and female, of different economic and social status and different levels of education were surveyed. These groups were associated with four dimensions of green marketing: sustainability, quality, price and durability of the service, through four purchase decision scenarios. This made it possible to identify in which groups and with which characteristics green marketing generates inclination, i.e. which type of people orient their purchases towards sustainable consumption.

Consumer behavior, purchasing decisions and sustainable consumption

Consumer behavior has always been the indispensable axis on which marketing strategies revolve, it is the central aspect of marketing. It is oriented to analyze how individuals choose or not a product, what factors are involved in the loyalty of a certain brand or in the abandonment of it. It is important to identify, in addition to the factors that can be controlled by companies, such as product, price, place and promotion, what other external, personal or individual factors are involved in the consumers' purchase decision (Bojorquez et al., 2022).

The purchase decision is the sequence in which the buyer goes through four stages prior to the selection and acquisition of a product or service. First, he identifies or perceives the existence of a specific problem or need; second, he searches and gathers information related to that need; third, he evaluates all possible alternatives; and finally, he makes the purchase decision and pays for the desired good or service. (Lay & Rodríguez, 2023).

Consumers play an important role and are agents that, with their tastes, beliefs, needs and experience, direct the way products are created and sold towards a current of friendship and respect for the environment, by preferring ecological, sustainable and sustainable products (León et al., 2022).

For consumers, the category of ecological, environmental or green is an indispensable feature in the purchasing decision. Their actions revolve around ecology and the preservation of the natural environment. This type of consumer is environmentally, ethically and socially responsible and tends to reject products that are not environmentally friendly or that harm people, animals and others. (Morales et al., 2023).

Purchase intention is the precursor of individuals' purchasing behavior, being a crucial factor in their decision making. Lack of information represents an obstacle to the purchase of organic food. Environmentally relevant behavior is influenced

by several causal factors, both general and behavior-specific. Both product characteristics and regulations exert a significant influence on pre-purchase evaluation, and this is linked to purchase intentions through the mediating effect of beliefs, attitudes and prior evaluation. "Self-pleasing" and "variety-seeking" play a significant role in shaping consumers' beliefs and attitudes toward organic products.(Yiwady et al., 2021)

Green marketing: an overview

Green marketing seeks to raise awareness of environmental damage to mitigate its impact, generating a novel type of marketing that serves to give recognition and improve the image of companies, as they assume sustainable, sustainable and friendly environmental commitments. (Rodríguez et al., 2020).

Achieving alignment between sustainability and competitiveness is increasingly proving to be a difficult task for organizations. Being sustainable means meeting environmental policies, offering competitive prices, performance factors - such as quality, speed and flexibility - and social benefits. Thus, through their actions, organizations should become involved in the communities in which they are inserted, cooperating for economic, social, cultural and environmental development. [Achieving alignment between sustainability and competitiveness is an increasingly difficult task for organizations. Being sustainable means addressing environmental policies, offering competitive prices, performance factors - such as quality, speed and flexibility - that generate social benefits. Thus, through their actions, organizations must engage with the communities in which they are inserted, cooperating for economic, social, cultural and environmental development] (Dias, 2020, p.2). (Dias, 2020, p.2)

The overall objective of green marketing focuses on boosting sustainable development without neglecting the needs of consumers, the main function is to achieve the fit between marketing strategies and environmental preservation. The evolution of green marketing consists of three stages according to Lazar (2017) citing Salas (2018):

1. Ecological phase: Developed from the conference organized by the AMA in 1975.
2. Environmental phase: Focuses on the design of innovative products using clean technologies to reduce pollution and industrial waste.
3. Sustainable phase: Organizations are concerned with developing products and technological innovations that are biodegradable, i.e., environmentally friendly and in line with the growing demands of their customers.

The term green or green marketing arises from the need to cover or assist the trend towards the current thinking of care, preservation and conservation of the environment and the health of people, before this Castro et al., (2020) state that green marketing is manifested from six environments:

Figure 1. Environments in which Green marketing manifests itself

Political environment

The government and companies work together to generate campaigns aimed at responsible consumption in favor of caring for the environment..

Economic environment

These types of campaigns must deliver extra care, generating less negative impact on their production without altering or increasing the price.

Socio-cultural environment

Promotes a change in culture towards the ideas of care and preservation, minimizing those actions that are harmful to society and the environment.

Technological environment

Technological advancement has generated a disruptive process in the way of attracting and reaching customers. Social networks play a fundamental role in current promotion. Production, for its part, has changed in order to generate less environmental impact..

Ecological environment

This aspect is the one that involves or connects the others, since the entire production and promotion process revolves around friendly products and processes, focused on generating a purchasing decision with quality, reduced environmental impact, friendly to the environment and people. , where affordability is an important factor.

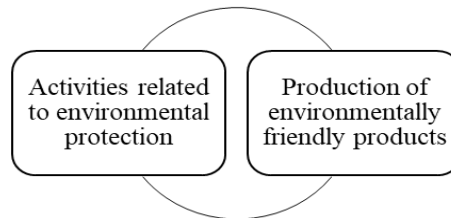
Legal environment

It mentions the environmental legislation undertaken in each state, aimed at the conservation of the environment where prohibitions, mandatory compliance actions as well as incentives that motivate voluntary compliance with environmental regulations are determined..

Note: From Castro et al., 2020.

According to Gaibor & Salazar (2022), the key points for green marketing to be effective are the following: It must be innovative i.e. the products must change the lifestyle of consumers. Intuitive since it must be easy to understand and more accessible, Inviting, the attributes must be improved, healthy and compatible with others, companies must adopt a new culture, Informative, effective communication, good information are fundamental pillars for the growth of green marketing and finally integrated since it must combine technology, environment and society through a range of economic, social and environmental development. And he states that green marketing can be divided into two types of business:

Figure 2. Green marketing classification



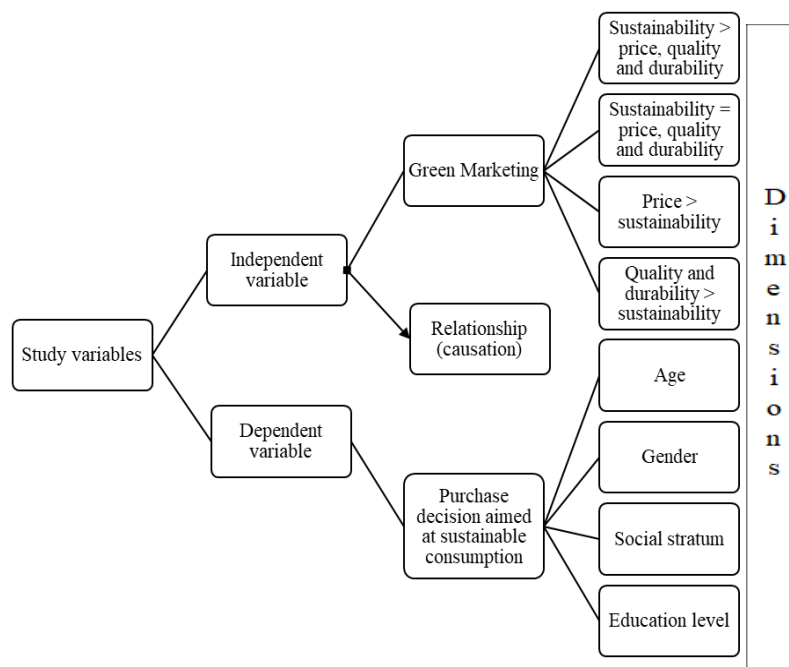
Note: Obtained from Gaibor & Salazar 2022

The green marketing mix in purchase intent according to Mahmoud (2018) cited by Garcia et al., (2022) is: Green product, green price, Green place or plaza and green promotion.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Correlational study in which the type of correlation between the study variables green marketing and purchase decision oriented to sustainable consumption is established, using four dimensions in each variable as detailed below.

Figure 3. Study variables and dimensions



Note: Own elaboration.

The research has a mixed qualitative-quantitative approach (Clark & Creswell, 2008) since it works with quantitative variables such as age and qualitative variables such as gender, economic and social status and level of education.

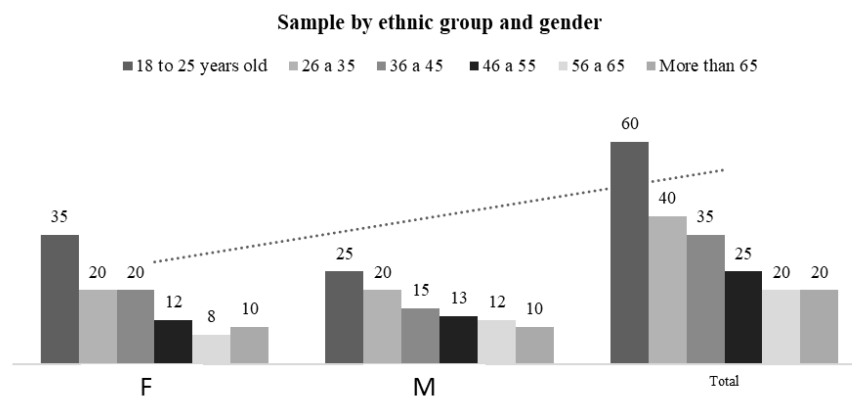
It is an empirical research that uses the survey as a data collection technique by means of the questionnaire instrument. The study population corresponds to individuals of the following age groups: 18 to 25 years old, 26 to 35, 36 to 45, 46 to 55, 56 to 65 and over 65 years old. The instrument focuses on identifying the influence of the green marketing

variable through four dimensions: sustainability, quality, price and durability, distributed in four scenarios: 1 Sustainability > price, quality and durability, 2 Sustainability = price, quality and durability, 3 Price > sustainability or 4 Quality and durability > sustainability, focusing on each group and relating the group and specific characteristics that reflect inclination towards green marketing at present. And the sustainable purchase decision variable by means of four dimensions: age, gender, economic-social status and level of education in order to identify to what extent the study dimensions are related and establish causality. Finally, the ethical considerations were carefully adhered to throughout the research process, ensuring participant confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent procedures were strictly followed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The instrument was applied to 200 individuals distributed in six age groups and in male and female gender. The results show that the most representative group corresponds to 30% between 18 and 25 years of age, of which 18% were female and 13% male. This was followed by 26 to 35 years old with 20%, 36 to 45 years old with 18%, 46 to 55 years old with 13%, 56 to 65 years old and over 65 years old with 10% respectively. In general, there are more female than male members in each age group.

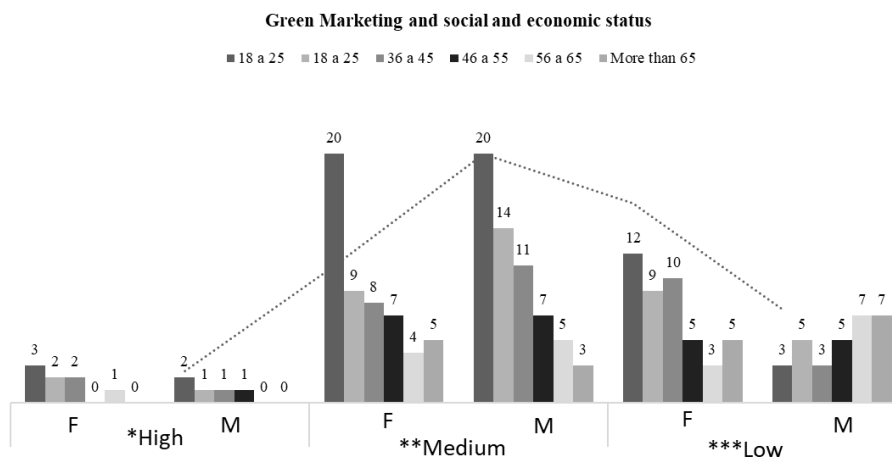
Figure 4. Sample by age and gender



Note: Ranges refer to age groups.

Women in the middle stratum have the highest participation at all ages. In general, the middle stratum has the highest participation in both genders and in all ages. The social stratum influences the purchasing decision since a person of low income, even if he/she wants to buy sustainable products, if these are not affordable, he/she will not be able to acquire them to the same extent as the middle or high stratum. In the study there are more individuals in the middle economic and social stratum. And in all strata there are more women than men.

Figure 5. Green marketing and economic and social status



Note: Ranges refer to age groups.

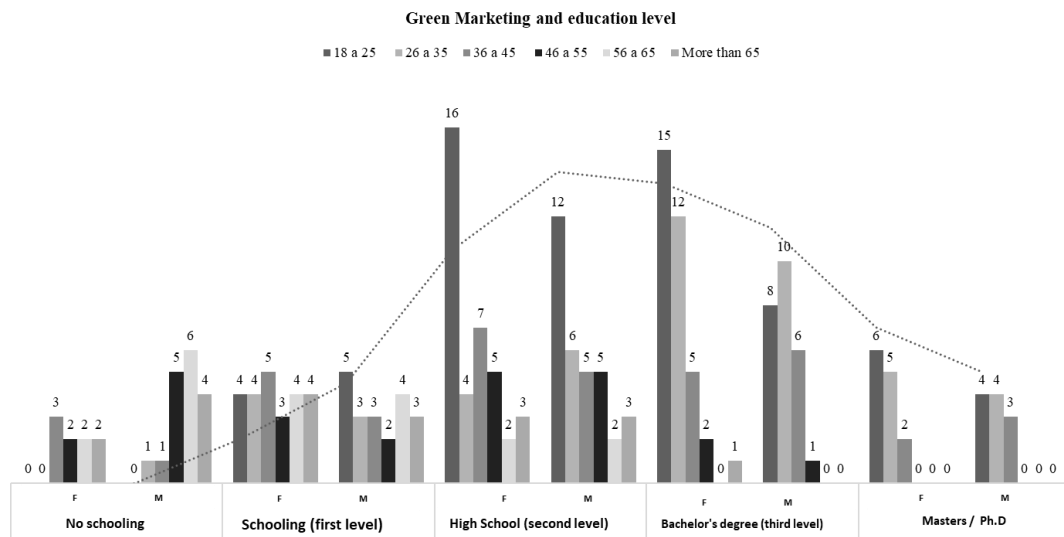
*High = high economic and social status.

**Medium = Medium economic and social status.

*** Low = Low economic and social status.

In general, there are more women than men at all levels of education, except in the group with no studies, where there are no gender differences. It is evident that women have a greater tendency to consume sustainable products regardless of their level of education, this is due to health reasons, preservation of physical appearance. Moreover, women are responsible for feeding and caring for their families, which may lead them to purchase sustainable products.

Figure 6. Green marketing and education level

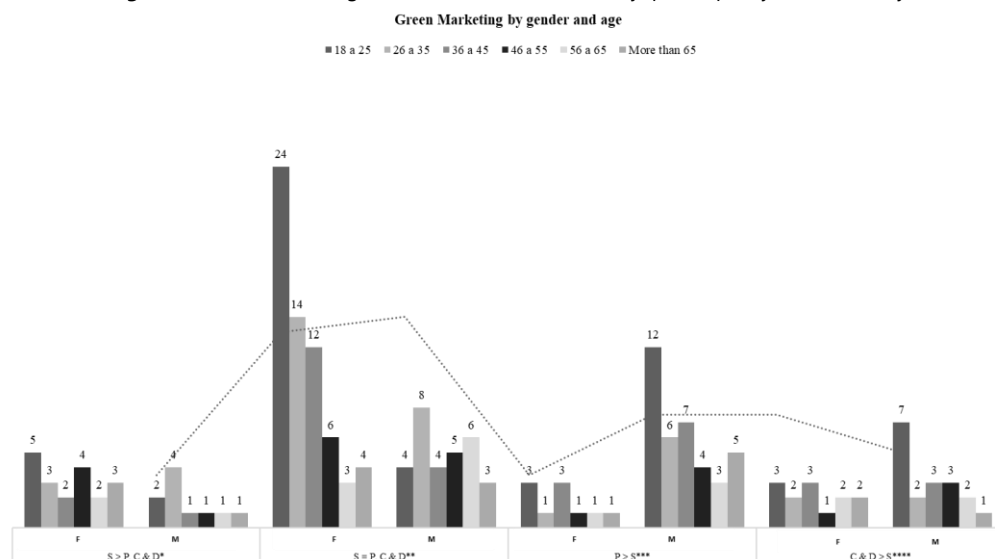


Note: Ranges refer to age groups.

The study variables are Green marketing through four dimensions: sustainability, price, quality and durability ordered by four scenarios: S > P, C & D means that sustainability is considered more important than price, quality and durability, S = P, C & D indicates that sustainability is equally important than price, quality and durability..., P > S suggests that price is considered more important than sustainability and C & D > S shows that quality and durability are considered more important than sustainability.

In the "S > P, C & D" category, women in the 18 to 25 years age group show the highest preference, with 24 responses, while men in the 36 to 45 years age group show the lowest preference with only 2 responses. In the "P > S" category, women in the 26 to 35 years age group have more responses (8) compared to men in the same group (4). Women seem to show a stronger preference for sustainability compared to men, especially in the 18-25 age group. The category "S = P, C & D" has a significant number of responses in all age and gender groups. The 26 to 35 age group has the highest total number of responses in the categories "P > S" and "C & D > S".

Figure 7. Green marketing and dimensions sustainability, price, quality and durability



Note: * S > P, C & D = Sustainability > price, quality and durability.

**S = P, C & D = Sustainability = price, quality and durability.

***P > S = Price > = sustainability.

****C & D > S = Quality and durability > sustainability.

Correlation matrix

The correlation matrix shows valuable information about the relationships between the study variables. The correlation coefficients are stronger in general for males than for females.

"GM" (Male Gender) shows a strong and positive correlation with all purchase scenarios, especially with "P > S" and "C & D > S".

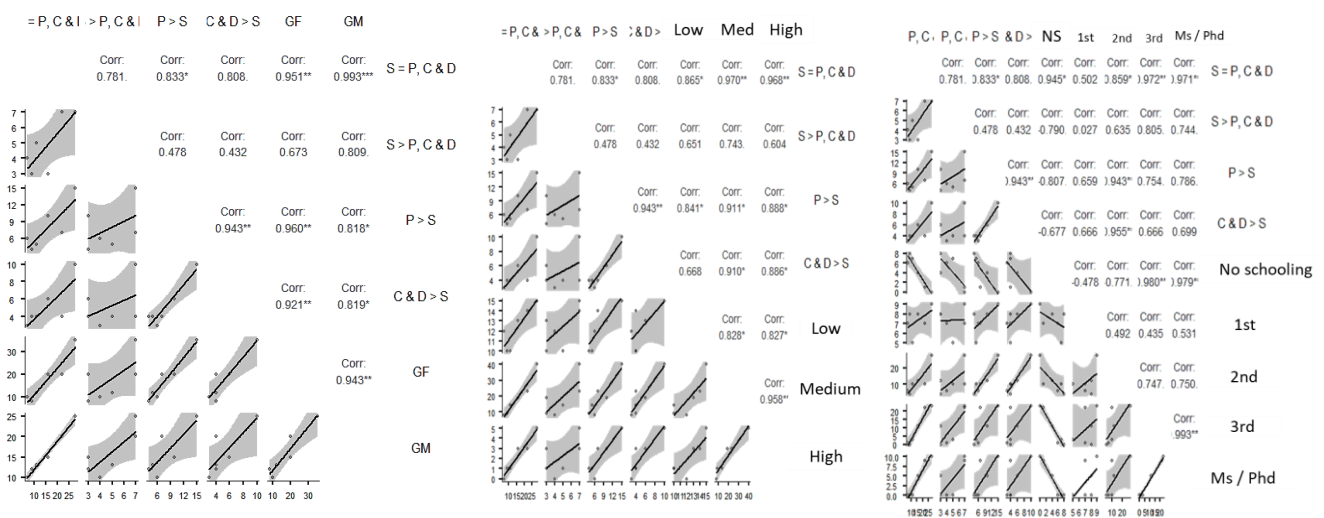
Correlation coefficients are stronger in general for women than for men, especially in sustainable consumption when sustainability goes hand in hand with price, quality and durability.

"GM" (Male Gender) shows a strong and positive correlation with all purchase scenarios, especially with "P > S" and "C & D > S".

The low economic and social status is oriented to a greater extent to purchases where sustainability goes hand in hand with price 0.86 and in second place with 0.84 suggests that it values accessible price more than sustainability. The medium status shows a correlation of 0.97 where sustainability is valued to the same extent as price, quality and durability, this is especially oriented towards the female gender and 0.91 where price is valued more than sustainability and 0.91 where the product is valued more for its durability and quality rather than sustainability, this is oriented towards the responses of the male gender. The high status has the highest correlation with the purchase scenario where the consumer is looking for a sustainable product, but the price is convenient, as well as quality and durability.

On the other hand, the level of education attained by people influences in such a way that the group with no education is oriented in 0.95 to sustainability to the same extent as price and quality. Those who have a primary school level in 0.66 value price, quality and durability of products more than sustainability. High school students have a similar behavior to that of elementary school students. Furthermore, third and fourth level have strong positive correlations with all purchase scenarios. Correlation coefficients are stronger in general for higher education levels.

Figure 8. Correlation graphs Green marketing and gender; Green marketing and social stratum; Green marketing and study level



Note: Own elaboration with research data.

Note: * S > P, C & D = Sustainability > price, quality and durability.
 **S = P, C & D = Sustainability = price, quality and durability.
 ***P > S = Price > = sustainability.
 ****C & D > S = Quality and durability > sustainability.

Analysis of the variables of gender, age, economic and social status, and educational attainment in relation to purchasing decisions reveals the complexity and diversity of the factors that influence consumer preferences, especially in the context of green marketing. Green marketing seeks to promote sustainable products and services, but understanding how different demographic groups respond to these initiatives is crucial to the success of these strategies. It is observed that women have a tendency towards sustainable consumption and green marketing plays a fundamental role, for example vegan products and products that do not use animals as proof are increasingly popular this largely due to awareness campaigns through green marketing that organizations have undertaken to encourage a shift towards sustainable consumption.

With respect to consumer age, the strong interest of young people in green marketing suggests that younger generations are more committed to sustainability. This offers a unique opportunity for brands to make meaningful connections with this segment, but also poses the challenge of maintaining that engagement as preferences evolve over time. The positive correlation between higher economic and social status and sustainable purchasing decisions highlights the importance of addressing equity in access to sustainable products and services. Green marketing should strive to provide affordable and accessible options for a variety of audiences.

In this regard, the risk of "greenwashing" (misleading business practices about environmental commitment) is real and can erode consumer confidence. It is crucial that companies back up their sustainability claims with genuine action and transparency. Diversity in preferences presents opportunities for personalization and segmentation in green marketing strategies. Adaptability and innovation in product presentation and messaging can make a difference.

The discussion of results, situated within the broader literature on green marketing and sustainable consumption, underscores several key findings and their implications. The observed tendency of women towards sustainable consumption aligns with previous research highlighting their heightened awareness and engagement with environmentally friendly practices (Peattie & Crane, 2005). This underscores the pivotal role of gender in shaping consumer behavior and suggests the importance of gender-sensitive approaches in green marketing campaigns. Furthermore, the strong interest of younger demographics in green marketing resonates with studies indicating that younger generations exhibit greater concern for environmental issues and are more receptive to sustainable product offerings (Shaw et al., 2006).

This presents an opportunity for brands to cultivate long-term relationships with environmentally conscious consumers from a young age. Moreover, the positive correlation between higher socioeconomic status and sustainable purchasing decisions corroborates findings that suggest affordability remains a barrier to widespread adoption of sustainable products, particularly among lower-income groups (Belz & Peattie, 2009). Thus, green marketing strategies must not only promote sustainability but also address affordability concerns to foster inclusive consumption patterns. Additionally, the discussion highlights the potential risks of "greenwashing" and emphasizes the importance of genuine corporate sustainability efforts backed by transparent practices, echoing concerns raised in prior literature (Polonsky, 2011). Overall, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between demographic factors, consumer attitudes, and green marketing strategies, offering valuable insights for businesses, policymakers, and researchers striving to advance sustainable consumption agendas.

Green marketing is not only about promoting sustainable products, but also about understanding the complexities of consumer attitudes. Reflection on the results highlights the need for a holistic and ethical approach to green marketing that not only focuses on the environmental aspect, but also considers the social and economic dimensions to build strong relationships with consumers and contribute to the shift towards more sustainable consumption.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REMARKS

The sample of 200 individuals spanned a wide range of ages and genders, with the 18-25 age group being the most representative. This demographic diversity strengthens the validity of the results and provides a comprehensive view of consumer preferences.

The prominent participation of women in the middle sector across all age groups suggests that this demographic is key to sustainable purchasing decisions, underscoring their influence on family purchasing decisions. Consideration of health, physical appearance and the traditional role of family caregiver are key factors driving women's choice of sustainable products form.

It highlights the importance of considering socioeconomic status when developing green marketing strategies, as access to sustainable products may vary according to social status. The fact that high status has the highest correlation with seeking sustainable products, but at convenient prices, highlights the complexity of purchase motivations and the need to address different market segments in a targeted manner.

The study's limitations encompass several key areas. Firstly, the sample size of 200 individuals, while diverse in age and gender, may not adequately capture the nuances of consumer preferences, potentially leading to biased or incomplete findings. Moreover, the overrepresentation of the 18-25 age group raises concerns about the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the study predominantly focuses on the middle socioeconomic stratum, neglecting the distinct behaviors of individuals from lower and higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The cross-sectional nature of the research limits its ability to establish causality or account for temporal changes in consumer attitudes. Furthermore, reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias and social desirability effects. Lastly, the study's generalizability beyond its specific

population and geographic location may be limited, warranting caution in applying the findings to diverse cultural and economic contexts.

A future research agenda should explore various facets of consumer behavior and perceptions within the realm of green marketing. Firstly, it seeks to delve into the dynamics of consumer trust in green marketing claims, particularly in relation to corporate sustainability practices. This will be investigated through a longitudinal study conducted on a global scale, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how consumer trust evolves over time in response to corporate sustainability initiatives. Additionally, the agenda includes examining consumer purchasing behavior concerning green marketing messaging, employing an experimental study methodology within a specific industry context. Furthermore, it aims to assess consumer perceptions of product quality in relation to eco-labeling practices, utilizing a cross-sectional survey approach to capture insights at a national level. Lastly, the agenda involves investigating consumer willingness to pay a premium for sustainable products, focusing on the influence of brand sustainability reputation through qualitative interviews conducted in regional markets. By addressing these diverse research inquiries, the agenda aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of consumer responses to green marketing initiatives across different contexts and dimensions. Table 1 summarizes the future research agenda proposed.

Table 1. A research agenda for future studies in the green marketing context

<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>Independent/explanatory variable</i>	<i>Method or approach</i>	<i>Context or object</i>
<i>Consumer trust in green marketing claims</i>	Corporate sustainability practices	Longitudinal study	Global market
<i>Consumer purchasing behavior</i>	Green marketing messaging	Experimental study	Specific industry
<i>Consumer perception of product quality</i>	Eco-labeling practices	Cross-sectional survey	National market
<i>Consumer willingness to pay premium</i>	Brand sustainability reputation	Qualitative interviews	Regional market

Source: own elaboration with the research data

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Task	% of contribution of each author			
	A1	A2	A3	A4
A. theoretical and conceptual foundations and problematization:	25%	25%	25%	25%
B. data research and statistical analysis:	25%	25%	25%	25%
C. elaboration of figures and tables:	25%	25%	25%	25%
D. drafting, reviewing and writing of the text:	25%	25%	25%	25%
E. selection of bibliographical references	25%	25%	25%	25%
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